

*Effort will improve student learning.*

(Washington, DC)— U.S. Senators Herb Kohl and Russ Feingold, and Congresswoman Gwen Moore, today unveiled legislation that would increase funding for universal school breakfast programs in schools across the nation. The Student Breakfast and Education Improvement Act of 2009 would provide grants, awarded on a competitive basis, to schools with at least 65 percent of students who are eligible for free and reduced price lunch. The legislation encourages creative breakfast programming, which includes serving breakfast during the school day, incorporating local foods into breakfasts and providing nutritional education. The Student Breakfast and Education Improvement Act of 2009 is cosponsored by Senators John Kerry (D-MA), Mark Begich (D-AK), Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), and Jon Tester (D-MT).

“Making sure our children are well fed is one of the most important actions we can take to improve education in Milwaukee, and all of Wisconsin,” Congresswoman Moore said. “With the proper nourishment, kids are able to concentrate on their school work instead of their hunger. Their performance improves, and they feel better mentally and physically. Just like textbooks, pencils and notebooks, a healthy breakfast is an essential tool to help ensure students’ success in the classroom.”

“Over the past nine years I have directed nearly \$6.5 million to Wisconsin for school breakfast grants,” Sen. Kohl said. “We recognize that these grants have made a positive difference in students’ lives and this measure would help take that progress nationwide.”

“In this difficult economy, low-income families are finding it even harder to provide nutritious food for their children and too many students are starting the school day hungry,” Sen. Feingold said. “Universal free breakfast programs can help ensure that no child’s education is sacrificed because of hunger. Studies show, and parents and teachers can attest, that children who eat a good breakfast participate more in school and are more focused in the classroom.”

Several states and school districts have already implemented breakfast expansion programs with great success. Milwaukee Public Schools, in partnership with the Milwaukee Hunger Task Force, last year began a pilot program that provides free breakfast to all students in more than

60 participating schools.

In March, 2000, Senator Kohl held a Congressional hearing in Green Bay to examine persistent childhood hunger issues. Later that year, he established a project in Wisconsin to provide funding for schools to help offset the costs associated with starting the federal school breakfast program. Kohl has also increased funding for nutrition programs as chairman of the Senate's Agriculture Appropriations panel.

Just over 1.7 billion breakfasts were served in schools across America through the Free and Reduced Price Breakfast program in fiscal year 2007, compared with more than 5 billion lunches through the Free and Reduced Price Lunch Program the same year. This disparity is the result of the barriers schools face in implementing breakfast programs. In addition, students face many obstacles in implementing breakfast programs.

Studies suggest that school breakfast programs can have a tremendous impact on student academic performance, and enhance the classroom environment by reducing tardiness and improving student attentiveness. Universal free breakfast programs -- especially if provided during the school day -- have proven to be a very successful way to increase classroom participation and better prepare students to learn.

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